

No need to knock, town in India has few doors anyway

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.27.15

Word Count **591**



Nanasahib Bankar, a businessman in Shani Shinganapur, India, stands outside his doorless house. Photo: Shashank Bengali/Los Angeles Times/TNS

SHANI SHINGANAPUR, India — Nanasahib Bankar is a farmer and businessman in this small Indian town. He worries about many things. He worries about the price of sugar cane. Bankar also worries about the health of his cattle and the success of his son's new hotel.

One thing he does not worry about is losing his keys. His house does not have a door. Most of the houses in this town do not have doors.

Bankar stands under the bare door frame of his red-brick house. He shares the house with 12 people in his family. With arms folded over his belly, the 64-year-old says simply, "This is the way we have always lived."

Power In The Legend

There is a legend in the town that a Hindu god keeps everyone safe. Hinduism is the religion of many people in India. The god's name is Shani. He is one of many Hindu gods. People believe that Shani prevents stealing and crime.

People who believe in Shani do not put locks on their doors or cupboards. They think this would make Shani angry because it would question his power. Some older people do not even put doors on their bedrooms. Most do not lock their cars or motorbikes. Some shopkeepers leave money in their drawers overnight.

The only bank in town has a see-through front door that remains unlocked day and night. Only the safe-deposit box is locked. This is where people keep their valuables.

Visitors Are Curious About The Stone

After dark, Bankar pulls a simple gray curtain across his front doorway. He holds the curtain in place with a piece of wood. He does not worry about anyone breaking in, except for a stray dog or a snake.

The legend of Shani Shinganapur has made the area famous. Thousands of people visit the town each day. They want to know more about the legend of Shani. They are also interested in a story that is told about the temple, where people pray.

Hundreds of years ago, a 5-foot block of black stone came out of the river. When the stone was tapped, blood poured from it, according to the legend.

People who live in the town say no one dared to move the stone. One night, a farmer dreamed that the stone spoke to him. It said it was Shani, the Hindu god. "I want to remain here," the stone said, and the next day farmers carried it up to dry land.

The farmers tried to build a temple for Shani. When villagers were building walls around the stone, there were problems. The walls collapsed. Some of the workers got hurt. The people decided that Shani could not be put in a regular temple. Instead, they placed it in a special spot out in the open. Then the villagers made their own homes more open by taking down their doors.

Truth Be Told

Over the years, the legend of Shani has grown, but there are still people who have doubts. They think the legend is just a way to bring visitors to the town. Others say bad things do happen in town. They say that the community's leaders try to keep these things quiet.

There have also been police reports of crimes. Some people say they have been robbed.

Finally, in September, it seemed that the town was dealing with the truth. A police station opened in Shani Shinganapur for the first time.

The police station does have doors. Out of respect for the legend of Shani, it has no locks.

Quiz

- 1 Select the sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-3] that BEST explains why Bankar does not worry about losing his keys.
 - (A) He shares the house with 12 people in his family.
 - (B) Bankar also worries about the health of his cattle and the success of his son's new hotel.
 - (C) His house does not have a door.
 - (D) He worries about the price of sugar cane.

- 2 Which sentence from the article BEST helps the reader to understand why some people in India do not have doors on their homes?
 - (A) People believe that Shani prevents stealing and crime.
 - (B) With arms folded over his belly, the 64-year-old says simply, "This is the way we have always lived."
 - (C) After dark, Bankar pulls a simple gray curtain across his front doorway.
 - (D) Most of the houses in this town do not have doors.

- 3 What is the MAIN idea of the section "Truth Be Told."
 - (A) Community leaders want the legend of Shani to grow, so that more people will visit the town.
 - (B) Many people believe in Shani, but there are still some people who do not believe.
 - (C) The leaders of the town believe in Shani, and they do not want people to know about the crime there.
 - (D) People respect the legend of Shani, but they are dealing with crime in the town.

4 Which sentences from the article are MOST important to include in its summary?

- (A) People who believe in Shani do not put locks on their doors or cupboards. They think this would make Shani angry because it would question his power.
- (B) His house does not have a door. Most of the houses in this town do not have doors.
- (C) The legend of Shani Shinganapur has made the area famous. Thousands of people visit the town each day.
- (D) The farmers tried to build a temple for Shani. When villagers were building walls around the stone, there were problems. The walls collapsed.